

Approved Sept. 16, 2015

**Town Meeting Coordinating Committee
Minutes for June 19, 2015, 3:00-5:00 pm
Bangs Center, Lower Meeting Room**

Present: Peggy Roberts, Nonny Burack, Patricia Holland, Mary Streeter, Melissa Perot, Chris Riddle, Alan Powell.

Visiting: Jim Pistrang.

Peggy called the meeting to order at 3:05 and welcomed Jim Pistrang, Town Meeting Moderator.

1. Public Comment: None.

2. Discussion of 2015 Annual Town Meeting with Moderator: Jim felt people at Town Meeting were rude. Peg said the Select Board also noted a general lack of civility, and recommended explaining the rules during Orientation. Jim said he is not able to correct wrong "facts" since he doesn't always know the facts. He said he gives preference to committees and petitioners, at his discretion. Chris noted that proponents of an articles (such as the Planning Board) thus get more time. Mary said she would like Jim to state this policy publicly.

Mary also noted how when speakers asked for extra time at the podium he would grant it by saying "If no objection," and she urged him to do that more often. He said he would try.

Nonny said she thought it unfair to give special treatment to Board members, that Town Meeting members should have equal time since Board members and TM members are equal partners inn government.

Chris commended him for defending himself against criticism.

Jim commented in regard to his rejection of Carol Gray's motion that he wished he had been contacted about it ahead of time. Mary said she felt Carol's motion was within the scope of the article. Melissa noted that TM members put in a great deal of time on issues brought by Boards, and, because they may bring in new information, they deserve equal treatment. Mary agreed. Jim responded that people always complain he doesn't call on them. He seeks advice from the town's attorney and an email group of town moderators.

He discussed the issue of having a backup/understudy moderator, as some towns have. He thought that would require a change to the town by-laws and also thought it a good idea. Nonny moved we urge the Moderator to plan for a substitute. TMCC voted unanimously to approve that motion.

Peggy read a complaint about the loudness of the Moderator's use of his gavel. He agreed to soften it.

Mary said that someone at the June 4th meeting of the Select Board complained that TMCC was not neutral. Jim advised we meet with him and the Select Board and explain what we do.

Peggy asked Jim how we in TMCC could make TM better. He advised telling members to be civil, to speak only if you have something new to say.

Mary commended Jim for starting TM earlier.

Chris asked whether a straw vote is possible in TM. Jim said it is and could be an option in the proposed electronic voting.

3. Moderator Book: Jim recommended the library buy *Town Meeting Time*, \$25 from the Mass. Moderators Association. He noted some rules are state, some town, and some in practice which this book covers. Chris admired Jim's consent calendar and also mentioned the issue of

allowing non-citizens to vote. Jim noted the feedback he has received: a third saying he defers to the boards, a third saying great job, a third saying he is rude to the boards. So he feels he's doing okay. He then left the meeting.

4. Auditorium Lighting: Chris visited Brian Ecclestone about the lighting in TM. It's theatrical incandescent lighting. John Bechtold would like LED but that costs \$2,000 per fixture and they need 20 new lights plus a new light board and booms. Chris said we could put in two stand lamps, stage right and left, and run the wiring under the stage. Chris said he will talk to Amherst Media about this. He will also check about induction circuits for the hearing impaired. Mary noted she wants Amherst Media to preserve TM footage; we used to have access to tapes.

5. Additional Tally Cards: Nonny said she discussed this matter with the Town Clerk and found doing that would require more time for the clerks. And, anyway, we will probably soon have electronic voting.

6. Topics Not Anticipated 48 Hours Before Meeting: 1) Chris said TMCC should hold two review/information meetings, one on zoning articles and one on everything else. Mary agreed. 2) We should schedule rooms for the Warrant Review and Zoning. Try for Oct. 13. Bus tour should be either Oct. 18th or 25th. 3) Pat will try to get a handicapped-accessible bus from PVTa.

7. Minutes: No time left.

8. Scheduling of Meetings: Discussed options without conclusion.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 PM.

Submitted by Patricia Holland, Clerk.

Documents Distributed:

Agenda

Calendar for Fall Special Town Meeting (prospective dates)

Draft Minutes of April 8, 2015 meeting